

Testimony for SB 707

February 16, 2026; Senate Finance Committee

From: Gina Beck, Montgomery County

POSITION: SUPPORT

I am a 68-year-old resident of Montgomery County. **My son is 34 years old. He was diagnosed with Schizophrenia in 2016. As a 6'1" 225 lb. black man with dreadlocks. He is immediately scary looking to some, and even more so if he is acting out due to his mental illness. Just "being" is a danger to his life.**

My son's story clearly illustrates the inadequacy of the current definition of danger, and the resulting extreme risk to the mentally ill person and others. He was unmedicated for 16 months, experiencing extreme psychiatric deterioration, delusions and paranoia.

His Group Home Director, with over 25 years of experience, contacted the Montgomery County Crisis center several times in hopes of getting him involuntarily admitted to a hospital psychiatric unit.

One call was when my son became very agitated because he was being denied cigarettes. At this point he had been hearing voices and experiencing delusions for several weeks. He cornered and pushed a staff member. The Montgomery County Crisis Center determined he did not meet the danger standard, so he remained in the home unmedicated.

On the next occasion he resisted staff efforts to get him to cooperate with house rules, like bathing and doing chores. He was agitated, ranting, making wild accusations, with absolutely no grasp on reality. He had not bathed in months and was eating only sporadically. He barricaded himself in his room with his mattress. Again, the Crisis Center was called. The Crisis team leader, after speaking briefly to him through his barricaded bedroom door, decided he did not meet the danger standard.

During the 16 months my son did not take medication the Crisis Center was called 4 times. Each time his behavior did meet the danger standard. A few weeks later my son attacked the Group Home Director knocking him down a flight of stairs. Police were called and finally my son was hospitalized in a psychiatric unit for a little over 30 days.

Even then it was a struggle. The hospital tried to release him a total of 4 times, the first was even before the hearing with a judge on the 8th day, who ordered that he be involuntarily admitted and medicated. The medication ordered by the judge did not begin until the 12th day of hospitalization, and on 13th day, the hospital tried to release him again. I had to argue with and threaten both the hospital and my insurance company with legal action every day to keep him hospitalized until we could secure a safe place for him to be released to. This took immense time and considerable money.

Psychosis is real and dangerous. Untreated it leads to psychiatric deterioration, personal neglect, and possible brain damage. People should not have to be attacked, and the ill person should not have to attempt suicide before they can be involuntarily admitted. We live in Maryland in the United States of America, not some third world country.

I understand that the laws currently in place are meant to protect human rights, but they are not protecting human beings!

An explicit danger standard definition would have prevented what happened to my son and to the wonderful Group Home Director who was doing everything he could to provide proper care.

I ask your support to implement a danger standard explicitly providing:

- The danger need *not* be imminent,
- Any available personal, medical and psychiatric history must be considered,
- Being unable to provide for basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, medical care, self-protection), or
- Suffering substantial deterioration of the individual's judgement, reasoning or ability to control behavior.

Respectfully and emphatically, Gina Beck

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